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ABSTRACT

The key to understanding the history of the comprehensive high school in the United States necessitates understanding that the comprehensive model has not been implemented as its inventors intended. Moreover, since the mid-20th century most scholarship on the comprehensive high school model has effectively dismissed the model as an antidemocratic and anti-intellectual survival from a less sophisticated, misguided educational policy. This paper provides a lengthy synopsis of the history of the comprehensive high school in the United States, together with a summary of prevailing historical interpretations of the comprehensive high school. It also details five misrepresentations of the historic record engendered by a confusion of consequences and intentions: (1) authorship of the Cardinal Principles Report; (2) social efficiency slant; (3) tracking; (4) anti-subject matter and anti-intellectualism; and (5) the forgotten elaboration of the comprehensive model. An appendix illustrates a proposal for a dual system of secondary education sponsored by the National Association of Manufacturers. (Contains 75 references.) (DFR)

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THE COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL IN THE UNITED STATES: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL IN THE UNITED STATES: CONFUSION OF CONSEQUENCES AND INTENTIONS?

The key to understanding the history of the comprehensive high school in the United States involves recognition of the reality that the comprehensive model has not been implemented as its inventors intended. Curriculum historians typically are keen to distinguish between the rhetoric and the reality of educational reform, with the aim of exposing the actual school conditions so often obscured by the glittering generalities emanating from one blue ribbon committee after another. In the case of the comprehensive high school, however, curriculum historians have depicted subsequent educational realities as intended consequences of the rhetoric advocating the model. As distance has been achieved from the original documents, current conditions have been erroneously attributed to the original design. The distinction between the rhetoric and the reality of the comprehensive high school has become blurred when an apparent eagerness to assign blame for undesirable conditions in secondary schools has overridden careful efforts to document systematically the historic record.

So it is that existing conditions in comprehensive high schools, such as rigid tracking schemes, are taken by critics of the model as dimensions of the vision of its early advocates. Thus, since midcentury, most scholarship on the comprehensive high school in the US has effectively dismissed the model as an anti-democratic and anti-intellectual survival from a less sophisticated, misguided educational policy. If, however, this perspective is undermined by a confusion of consequences with intentions, then perhaps the comprehensive model has more to offer educational improvement in the 21st century than scholars thus far have been willing to submit. After providing a synopsis of the history of the comprehensive high school in the US and a summary of prevailing historical interpretations of the comprehensive high school in the US, five misrepresentations of the historic record engendered by a confusion of consequences and intentions are addressed.

Historical Synopsis[1]

The comprehensive high school model emerged from the early twentieth-century debate over whether secondary education in the United States should emulate the class-based European dual systems, or depart from those aristocratic traditions and organize instead as a unitary, democratic system. Edwin G. Cooley, for example, former Superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools, was a leading advocate of a dual system that emulated Germany's approach to industrial education. Cooley proposed that, at age fourteen, students leave elementary school either for college preparation in traditional academic secondary schools or for

[1] This section is adapted from Wraga (1998) and based upon Wraga (1994).

industrial education provided through a variety of options. As Cooley (1912) put it,

> Separate schools are necessary whose equipment, corps of teachers, and board of administration must be in the closest possible relation to the occupations. In such schools the applications of general education to vocational work can be made only by men who know the vocations. The boards of education administering such institutions must give them far greater attention on the practical side than the ordinary boards of education need to do in the case of academic schools. (p. 154)

Cooley sponsored a bill in Illinois that would provide separate control of industrial education and in effect would have created a dual system of secondary education in that state. The bill was opposed by educators, among them John Dewey, and ultimately defeated.

While the proponents of a dual system were many and included educators and businessmen, notably the National Association of Manufacturers (see Figure 1), proponents of a unified system were numerous as well (e.g., Dewey, 1985; Inglis, 1918). Davenport (1914), for example, argued that formation of specialized vocational schools would amount to a "most powerful step toward the segregation of people according to vocational lines and from that time on it is inevitable that the stratification of society will proceed by leaps and bounds" (p. 131). He suggested that, "It is in every way un-American to organize society along vocational lines" (p. 131). Rather, Davenport insisted that the "ultimate and proper goal is the cosmopolitan high school" (p. 133) in which the student

> makes a tentative selection of his vocational group and devotes perhaps one-fourth of his time to those special studies, leaving the other three-fourths of his time for the non-technical and general subjects in common with all the other students in the school. He, therefore, associates with his own particular group one-fourth of the time, and for the rest of the time is associated with other people of other groups. (p. 132)

After nearly a decade of debate over the dual versus unitary system, the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, though providing for area vocational schools, in effect settled the issue in favor of the comprehensive high school. Ultimately, vocationalism in education would expand the traditional secondary curriculum, in the process welcoming a wider range of students to the high school. Summarizing the shift that had occurred since the Committee of Ten Report (1893), Cremin (1955) noted that "From an institution conceived for the few, the high school became an institution conceived for all" (p. 307).

The report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (CRSE) (1918), Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, served as the blueprint for the American comprehensive high school. The existence of academic and

vocational studies under the same roof became the distinguishing feature of the comprehensive high school. The CRSE (1918) established two complementary functions of the comprehensive high school. The specializing function would have the comprehensive high school serve the variegated needs of a heterogeneous student population through a variety of courses, programs, and activities. The unifying function required that the comprehensive high school include provisions for unifying youths with different backgrounds, abilities, and aspirations so that they would learn to live together in a diverse democratic society. The specializing and unifying functions were advanced in virtually all subsequent proposals for the comprehensive high school.

Within the first decade following the release of the Cardinal Principles report, however, the reality that the specializing function would take precedence over the unifying function was already apparent. This reality was evident in a marked emphasis on providing for a variety of specialized courses with little corresponding attention to unite students of different backgrounds, abilities, and aspirations. U.S. Office of Education surveys of offerings and enrollments conducted in 1890, 1906, 1910, 1922, 1928, and 1934 documented the unprecedented increase in the number of specialized courses offered in American high schools (Jessen, 1938). While in 1895 high schools collectively offered about a dozen and a half subjects, by 1934 they offered over 200. Vocational subjects in particular proliferated during the early 1920s. Commitment to the specializing function and to housing academic and vocational programs under the same roof are apparent in the surveys of school offerings from this period.

The introduction of tracking to the secondary school, however, was the most significant development for the comprehensive model during this period. The rise of group testing, precipitated by World War I and university psychologists eager to ply their trade beyond the halls of academia (Chapman, 1988, p. 85 passim), and the vulnerability of a new class of aspiring educational administrators (Callahan, 1962) to the influence of dominant business values, combined to impose the use of group testing for sorting students by intelligence, interest, and other variables upon the schools. The result was a system of tracking that divided students in ways inimical to the unifying intent of the comprehensive model.

During the 1930s and 1940s, national energies mobilized to resolve social crises of potentially catastrophic proportions--namely the Great Depression and World War II--and educational developments, if not directed at the particular crises, were preoccupied with the social ramifications and possibilities of schooling (Kliebard, 1986; Tanner & Tanner, 1990). During this era the comprehensive high school was heralded as the institution best suited for educating all American youth. Two proposals for secondary education are representative of the characteristic commitment to the comprehensive high school that prevailed during this time.

The Educational Policies Commission (EPC) (1952) proposed a secondary curriculum comprised principally of "common" studies and

"differential" studies in much the same way as the CRSE had proposed curriculum "constants" and "variables" three decades earlier (p. 221). The EPC advocated a wide range of vocational offerings, as well as conventional "academic" subjects and programs for the gifted and the handicapped to be offered under a single roof. While the EPC's recommendations were rooted in the precedent established by the Cardinal Principles report, they were prescient in calling not only for differentiated programs to serve the gifted, but also for including the handicapped in the mainstream of regular education. The unifying function of the comprehensive high school would be met chiefly, though not exclusively, through the "Common Learnings Course," taken each year by every student (pp. 223-239).

Of the numerous reports supporting the model, none seems to have represented the spirit and intent of the comprehensive high school with greater fidelity than the Eighth Yearbook of the John Dewey Society, simply entitled, The American High School: Its Responsibility and Opportunity (Caswell, 1946). "The American tradition," the Yearbook Committee insisted, "is opposed to the early segregation of students according to intellectual, social or other quality" (p. 135). "The public school is the only agency in most communities," it concluded, "which brings people of all economic, social and religious backgrounds together" (pp. 136-37). The committee vigorously opposed separate vocational schools and anticipated the impending role of the public schools as mitigators of racial stereotyping and prejudice.

The American High School prescribed particular curriculum components to provide for both general and specialized education--parallel, again, with the curriculum organization proposed in the Cardinal Principles report. These components included, briefly, "a basic core offering to provide a body of common, integrating experiences," "special interest offerings to provide for the optimum development of individual interests and aptitudes and to prepare youth for work," and "organized student life to afford an opportunity for active participation in democratic group processes which foster understanding of social and political procedures" (pp. 142-43).

The heyday of the comprehensive high school, however, would not last long. During the 1950s, the comprehensive high school was depicted as an intellectual and moral "wasteland" and proposals that dismissed comprehensiveness in favor of specialized academic schools prevailed. Historian Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., for example, rejected comprehensiveness, maintaining that, "An educational institution contributes in a specialized, not an all-inclusive way" to preparing individuals for life (Bestor, 1953, p. 15). Then the Sputnik crisis made academic preparation for cold war military and industrial rivalry the national priority and the prescription for the secondary school. Comprehensiveness was at best ignored in favor of the academic priority, at worst condemned--even rejected--as the cause of the nation's failure to keep pace with Soviet man-, military- and space-power. Cold warrior Admiral Hyman Rickover (1959) exemplified this sentiment when he wrote, "In the American comprehensive school the pupil

finds a display of courses resembling the variegated dishes in a cafeteria. . . . No wonder he often gorges himself on sweets instead of taking solid meat that must be chewed" (p. 143).

In the midst of this fray James Bryant Conant (1959) distinguished himself as the champion of the comprehensive high school and advocated a cold war version of the model that, while certainly emphasizing the specializing academic function over the unifying function, in the prevailing hostile educational climate made the model palatable to many educators and policy makers. Conant (1958) characterized the comprehensive school in the United States as "a great engine of democracy" (p. xi) and embraced the complementary specializing and unifying functions when he held that, "Within this one school there can be and must be differentiation of courses of study but ideally there should be some part of the formal program shared by all the students" (p. 60). His commitment to the comprehensive model was such that he went so far as to "plead with those who insist as a matter conscience on sending their children to denominational schools that they might limit their insistence on this type of education to the elementary years" (p. 82).

While Conant was the most prominent advocate of the comprehensive school during this era, he was in no way alone in his advocacy. Advocacy of the model is also found in the Thirty-Sixth Yearbook of the American Association of School Administrators, entitled The High School in a Changing World (1958), the report of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's Commission on the Education of Adolescents (1959), entitled The High School We Need and the Report of President Eisenhower's Commission on National Goals (1960), entitled Goals for Americans. Despite such high profile endorsements, however, the continued support for the comprehensive model by educators was muted by the din of nationalistic educational reform rhetoric and activity.

Meanwhile, secondary course offerings continued to expand. In 1948-49 the U.S. Office of Education conducted its first survey of offerings and enrollments since 1933-34 and found a growing variety of courses in American secondary schools (Biennial Survey, 1951). The broad fields of industrial arts and home economics enjoyed the greatest percentage increase since the last survey and physical education, typewriting, general math, and U.S. History were the fastest growing courses. A continuing commitment to the specializing function of the comprehensive high school remained evident. The next survey, conducted in 1960-61, reflected continuing enrollment growth in industrial arts, stable enrollments in agriculture, and declines in vocational trade and industrial education (Wright, 1965). Significant increases in both percentage and number of students enrolled in math, science and foreign language courses probably reflected the impact of school criticism and cold war anxieties of the previous decade. Notably, the survey suggested that, in general, the larger the high school, the greater the diversity of courses it was able to offer.

During the 1960s, the demand for the academic priority in the schools was soon displaced by accusations of appallingly bureaucratic and depersonalizing school settings, and by federal legislation intended to promote equalization of social and economic opportunity through mandated educational programs (PL 89-10, 1965). The schools were seen simultaneously as the perpetrators and the ameliorators of social disaffection and oppression. Friedenberg (1965), for example, characterized the high school experience as "very often like a bad book; sentimental, extrinsically motivated, [and] emotionally and intellectually dishonest" (p. 219). The popular prescription for such appalling and allegedly widespread educational conditions was to raze the existing system and erect in its place alternative schools and experiences. Ironically, such proposals held ramifications similar to those held by the recommendations of the essentialists before them--in both cases the comprehensive school would be dismantled, leaving academically-oriented pupils in a college-prep institution and everyone else in alternative, usually non-academic settings. Although the specializing function was further bolstered by federal legislation, extreme proposals for alternatives to the comprehensive school threatened the largely overlooked unifying function. Further, for the first time a decline of commitment to the comprehensive model on the part of educators was apparent (Levine, 1966). The momentum of popular reform and the growing apathy of many professional educators increasingly weighed against the model.

The public school system, of course, was not dismantled. Results of the 1972-73 survey of offerings and enrollments, however, reflected reforms of the previous decade (Osterndorf, 1975). Since the 1961 survey, proportions of students enrolled in traditional courses generally declined, while enrollments in courses such as sociology, environmental science, consumer education, earth and space science, and drama increased significantly. These trends seem to reflect, at least in part, the popularity of elective courses during the late 1960s and early 1970s that attempted to bring increased "relevance" to the curriculum in the wake of the discipline-centered reforms of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Commitment to the specializing function continued to be evident in offerings and enrollment figures.

During the 1970s, as the nation slid into economic retrenchment and political malaise and disillusionment, the originally fringe proposition for alternative forms of schooling to supplement or even replace the existing educational system received "official" sanction from a series of reports issued by prestigious national panels (National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education, 1973; Panel on Youth of the President's Science Advisory Committee, 1974; National Panel on High School and Adolescent Education, 1976). The National Panel on High School and Adolescent Education (1976), for example, suggested that it "would shift the emphasis away from the <u>comprehensive school</u> toward <u>comprehensive education</u>, arguing that the confines of one building are no longer enough to contain all the valuable

necessary experiences for today's young person" (p. 8, emphasis in original). While the public school system was never abandoned to the extent recommended by these reports, a shrinking economy resulted in educational retrenchment that held ramifications for comprehensiveness as the scope of curricular offerings contracted (Ravitch, 1983; Tanner & Tanner 1990).

During the 1980s, panic over the poor performance of American business in global markets led to cries for educational reform aimed at boosting economic competitiveness (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; National Science Board, 1983). Reform reports portrayed the nation "at risk" due to shoddy practices and slipping standards in the public schools. Echoing school criticisms of the 1950s, reform proposals of the 1980s would reduce the comprehensive secondary curriculum to a narrow college preparatory program aimed at producing students equipped to deal with scientific and technological developments conducive to promoting business interests. With one exception, the comprehensive high school went virtually unmentioned in these reports, suggesting the model had become something of a non issue in educational reform. In language reminiscent of Bestor's 1950s attacks on the comprehensive high school, Theodore Sizer (1984), however, claimed that, "High schools cannot be comprehensive and should not try to be comprehensive; there are some aspects of an adolescent's life in which a school has no right to intrude, and helping students to use their minds well is a large enough assignment, in any case" (p. 216). Sizer advocated, among other things, narrowing the secondary curriculum to minimal academic studies and abolishing compulsory high school attendance.

The latest study of trends in student course taking (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1984) reported that between 1972 and 1982 "there was an overall increase of about 14 percent in course-taking behavior--resulting perhaps from a tendency of schools to offer more and shorter courses" (p. 5). The survey found that while more schools offered vocational courses in 1982, the percentage of students enrolled in vocational courses remained about the same (p. 19). It estimated that new courses accounted for only 0.3% of total enrollments and were offered in merely 8.4% of secondary schools, perhaps reflecting the retrenchment of the 1970s. Because 1982 course titles were redefined to match the 1972 titles, however, assessing the appearance of new offerings is problematic. The emphasis of this study seemed to reflect the growing neglect of the comprehensive model and the exaltation of academic subjects that characterized 1980s reforms.[2]

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[2] During the 1980s for the first time the U.S. Government did not conduct its own survey of offerings and enrollments in secondary schools, instead contracting the job to a private firm (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1984). Rather than conducting a new survey, a "trend study" was undertaken using extant data from other surveys. For the first time also the report did not discuss the findings in the context of the historic American commitment to educating all youth. Instead, the focus of the 1984 trend study was on the courses identified in the A Nation at Risk report as the "new basics."

Ironically, during the latter part of the 1980s, even as the financial excesses of the supply-side decade were beginning to show signs of wear on the vitality of the national economy, reformers advanced a case for public schools of choice based largely on free market idealism (Raywid, 1989; Chubb & Moe, 1990). Under this scheme, the comprehensive high school would disintegrate as parents sent their children to narrow specialty schools.

As the century turns, the future efficacy of the comprehensive high school model appears uncertain. Developments such as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, the Carl D. Perkins Applied Technology Education Act, and the growing commitment of educators to abandoning the practice of tracking continue the legacy of promoting inclusion and integration of all youth through the agency of the common, comprehensive school. But proposals for school choice, vouchers, and even charter schools could result in specialized programs that segregate students by aptitude, interest, and aspiration. National goals and subject content standards could have the effect of exalting the academic college preparatory function of the secondary school at the expense of vocational studies and comprehensiveness. Finally, as a public institution vulnerable to the prevailing sociopolitical wind, the comprehensive public high school could be threatened simply by the fact of being forgotten. The near total absence of the comprehensive model from current policy and reform discussions may suggest that its functions and features are no longer paramount concerns and that the model has come simply to be taken for granted.

Historically, in practice the specializing function has been exalted at the neglect of the unifying function. Out of a strong commitment to serve individual needs, perhaps reflecting the great value Americans place on individualism, specialized courses and programs proliferated to the point that the existence of variegated course offerings alone has become the sole criteria for the now commonplace label "comprehensive high school." The segregation of students along occupational, ethnic, racial, and class lines that resulted from tracking violated the unifying function of the comprehensive model. Thus, at the most general level, the intentions of the designers of the comprehensive high school that the specializing and unifying functions would be implemented in concert with each other in practice typically were not honored. From a historical perspective, to date the comprehensive high school model remains at best half-implemented.[3]

Historians's Perspectives

Prior to 1960, educational historians devoted surprisingly little explicit attention to the comprehensive high school model (Cubberly, 1919; Kandel, 1930; Knight, 1941 1952; Noble, 1954). Typically, historians recognized generally the expansion of

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[3] It is perhaps more accurate, therefore, to refer to most American high schools as "comprehensive-style schools" in order to avoid confusing the implemented reality with the rhetorical (or theoretical) ideal of the comprehensive model.

secondary education and the continuing American commitment to universal secondary education. Discussions of the Cardinal Principles report were brief, focusing on the seven aims with occasional reference to the report's democratic philosophy of schooling (Noble, 1954, p. 412; Kandel, 1930, p. 489). Cubberly (1919) mentioned the "cosmopolitan" high school explicitly, but presented it as one of a variety of accepted forms of secondary education in the US. Although early histories typically contrasted the universal character of the American high school with the selective character of European systems, they offered no systematic documentation or analysis of the debate over the dual versus unitary system of secondary education. Only Noble (1954) suggested that vocational education seemed most appropriately housed in general public high schools. Butts and Cremin (1953) recognized in the comprehensive high school the American commitment to education for all and concluded that the "comprehensive high school has become the most typical kind of institution for youth throughout the country and is largely a distinctive American creation" (p. 593).

Edward Krug (1964) devoted the first systematic attention to documenting the origins of the comprehensive model in the US. His interpretation, however, departed significantly from the generally sanguine if lackadaisical perspective that most education historians previously had on the comprehensive model. Krug recounted the debate over specialized versus "composite" high schools and noted the growing disfavor by World War I of educators toward a dual system and growing favor toward the comprehensive model. Krug devoted an entire chapter to a description of the preparation of the Cardinal Principles report. Here Krug argued that CRSE chair Clarence Kingsley was the principal, if not sole author of the Cardinal Principles report and that, likely influenced by David Snedden, Kingsley was largely responsible for the social efficiency slant of the report. Krug implied that other CRSE members essentially acquiesced to Kingsley's views. The association of the Cardinal Principles report with Snedden through Kingsley was pivotal to Krug's contention that the report manifested social efficiency-social control ideology.

In short, Krug's interpretation of the report has become an article of faith among educational and curriculum historians. For the last 40 years, virtually all historians of American education have subscribed to the presumption that the comprehensive high school is best understood as a manifestation of social efficiency-social control ideology (e.g., Tyack, 1967; Kliebard, 1968, 1986, 1999; Spring, 1990; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Urban & Wagoner, 2000). Yet if educational historians working between 1920 and 1960 can be faulted for taking the comprehensive high school for granted, then historians working since 1960 can be faulted for taking a single interpretation for granted.[4] For the prevailing

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[4] Recently, some historians have taken for granted the validity of popular criticisms of the comprehensive high school in particular and of public education in general, and have cited these criticisms as evidence of the

view that the comprehensive model manifests social efficiency-social control ideology is undermined by a series of errors of fact, specifically of errors of omission, that together result in a confusion of consequence and intentions of the comprehensive model.

Misperceptions of the Comprehensive High School

Five errors of fact, ranging in increasing order of magnitude from the matter of who wrote the Cardinal Principles report to the reality that the comprehensive ideal was elaborated over four decades in a series of reports, warrant correction by education scholars. The collective correction of these errors points to renewed significance of the comprehensive model for school reform today.

Authorship of the Cardinal Principles Report

Krug's attribution of principal, if not sole, authorship of the Cardinal Principles report to CRSE chairman Clarence Kingsley, an interpretation widely and unquestioningly endorsed by education and curriculum historians, is not supported by the surviving archival documents pertaining to the CRSE's work (Wraga, 1999). Although surviving records indicate that Kingsley assumed responsibility for preparing drafts of sections of the Cardinal Principles report, records also indicate that, in fact, Kingsley continuously sought and received input from members of the reviewing committee about the evolving drafts of the report--indeed, the operating procedures that the CRSE established required ratification of all text. Insufficient evidence exists, however, to support Krug's contention that the final document was largely the handiwork of Kingsley and thus problematizes the assumption that Snedden's fingerprints are evident on the report. Surviving records from 1915 and 1916 point to ample input to the document from reviewing committee members. Krug played down and even overlooked these efforts. Krug was able to depict Kingsley as the sole intellectual author of the Cardinal Principles report by virtue of selective quoting from surviving records of the CRSE. The full text of these documents, however, casts Krug's interpretation into doubt.

This reality is important because Krug and his successors used the Kingsley authorship hypothesis to associate the report--and the comprehensive high school model--with social efficiency-social control ideology. Consequently, the possibility that other strains of progressivism are apparent in the report has been discounted. One likely influence on the report, which Krug dismissed out of hand, was John Dewey. Despite his acknowledgment that, "Undoubtedly Kingsley and his colleagues on the reviewing committee did know Dewey's writings, or some of them," Krug (1964, p. 400) claimed, "It is difficult, however, to see Dewey as a direct influence." Krug dismissed the possibility of the influence of Dewey's (1916) Democracy and Education by contending that "Kingsley may have been influenced by it, but there is no need to assume this in order to account for the nature of the

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obsolescence of the comprehensive high school. See Herbst (1996) and Angus and Mirel (1999).

report" (p. 402). Yet the number of principles in the report that resemble Dewey's ideas about secondary education is remarkable. From the emphasis on the application of subject matter, to the moral implications of democracy, to the role of the secondary school in unifying a diverse population (Dewey, 1976a, 1976b), to advocacy of the comprehensive high school over a dual system of secondary education (Dewey, 1915, 1985a, 1985b, 1985c), the Cardinal Principles report manifests many ideas that Dewey had championed (Wraga, 1994). Arguably, this resemblance is much greater than the resemblance with Snedden's ideas, which Krug preferred.

Social Efficiency Slant

As noted, following Krug's work, the favored interpretation of the Cardinal Principles report and of the comprehensive high school model among education scholars holds that both manifest narrow social efficiency-social control ideology. Krug (1964) put it best when he characterized social efficiency as "the management, and even the restraint, of individual behavior on behalf of the group" (pp. 249-50). He implicated the comprehensive school in perpetrating social efficiency when he summarized:

> the school would equip each young citizen to function in a society whose touchstone would be orderly and efficient management. The institution favored for this purpose was the public high school: not the allegedly narrow, academic school of the past, but a comprehensive high school housing a variety of curricula and enrolling youth of diverse abilities and interests. (1972, p. 3)

Yet, the deterministic conception of social control that education scholars (e.g., Kliebard, 1986; Ravitch, 1985; Spring, 1990) rail against is hardly evident in the Cardinal Principles report. Throughout the report, the CRSE (1918) stressed the mutual development of the society and the individual. "It is the ideal of democracy that the individual and society may find fulfillment each in the other. Democracy sanctions neither the exploitation of the individual by society, nor the disregard of the interest of society by the individual" (p. 9). "Efficiency" demanded that "the individual choose that vocation and those forms of social service in which his personality may develop and become most effective" (p. 9). The report concluded, "Consequently, education in a democracy, both within and without the school, should develop in each individual the knowledge, interests, ideals, habits, and powers, where by he will find that place and use that place to shape both himself and society toward ever nobler ends" (p. 9). This synthesis of the development of the individual and society is a distinctly Deweyan (1916) notion and could be read in the Cardinal Principles report as an effort to counter the deterministic brand of social efficiency propagated by the likes of Snedden.

In fact, the CRSE seems to have employed the term "efficiency" in order to denote not economy, but competence (Wraga, 1994a, 1994b). Throughout the report, the term was often

used interchangeably with "effectively." In a discussion of organizing the curriculum, for example, the CRSE on one line stated that a director should be charged "to organize that curriculum and maintain its efficiency" (p. 27). In a concluding statement on this same concern, the CRSE insisted that "the various curriculums are effectively organized" (p. 27). In no less than three instances, the term efficiency was coupled with the term "intelligence." Although the Cardinal Principles report used the word "efficiency" and advocated that secondary education should prepare the individual for life and work in society, it in no way advocated the kind of narrow, deterministic social efficiency ideology that scholars attribute to it. That some forms of social control practices appeared in American high schools is no doubt an accurate observation; to attribute such practices to the intent of the CRSE' comprehensive model is problematic.

In summary, Krug's depiction of the Cardinal Principles report as a manifestation of social control ideology, supported by his attribution of authorship to Kingsley and the association of Kingsley and Snedden, created favorable conditions for subsequent researchers to attribute to the comprehensive model practices that, in effect, were actually inimical to the comprehensive ideal. Thus, consequences of the incomplete implementation of the model have been mistaken for intentions of the architects of the comprehensive ideal.

Tracking Tracking

Among the practices depicted as intentions of the architects of the comprehensive high school, none receive the attention garnered by tracking. Oakes (1985, p. 3) defined tracking as "the process whereby students are divided into categories so that they can be assigned in groups to various kinds of classes" with little or no opportunity to "cross the tracks." Recently, Oakes claimed that the CRSE "established academic and vocational tracking as a suitable way for high schools to accommodate the increasing diversity of their students " and referred to "the rigid tracking system outlined in the Cardinal Principles" (Oakes & Wells, 1999, n.p.). This interpretation of the Cardinal Principles report is predicated on depicting the CRSE's provision of differentiated curriculums chosen by students based upon their interests and aptitudes as a rigid, deterministic sorting scheme imposed on students by school authorities.

This interpretation is problematic for the following reasons: 1) disregard of the fact that around 1918, given the sheer reality that the vast majority of students entered the work force, selecting and preparing for a vocation in high school was something of an imperative; 2) that *the CRSE put the responsibility for this choice not on the school, but on the student* (p. 18); 3) that *the CRSE maintained that students should be able to change curriculums* (p. 25); 4) that *specialized curriculums were not designed as the whole of the student's program, but as one portion complemented by unifying experiences* (pp. 23, 24); 5) that forms of tracking existed in secondary schools prior to the development of the comprehensive

model and are apparent even in the Committee of Ten's designation of superior and inferior secondary curriculum options; 6) that rigid tracking became prevalent in secondary schools during the 1920s when sociopolitical forces, including a pervading preoccupation with individualism, a blind faith in standardized tests to identify personal capacities and sort students accordingly (promoted by psychologists such as Louis Terman), and the vulnerability of school administrators to public pressures, converged; 7) and that the early 20th century alternative to the comprehensive model--students placed inexorably in a dual European-style, class-based multi-tiered educational system--would have been far more divisive even than tracking. That the CRSE also called for wider access to higher education than was then available ("The conception that higher education should be limited to the few is destined to disappear in the interests of democracy" [p. 20]) also attests to the CRSE commitment to increasing, not limiting, educational opportunities.

Tracking, then, is a manifestation of both the exaltation of the specializing function and the neglect of the unifying function--and as such violates the comprehensive ideal. The recommendation of the CRSE for common experiences designed to mitigate against the potentially divisive effects of specialized programs designed to serve individual needs may well be an elegant solution to the complex problem of simultaneously accommodating diversity and fostering commonality. Unsurprisingly, subsequent proponents of the comprehensive model consistently inveighed against the separation of students along social class and other lines (e.g., Educational Policies Commission, 1939; Caswell, 1946). Rigid tracking, then, was a consequence of the incomplete implementation of the comprehensive model.

Anti-Subject Matter and Anti-Intellectualism

Critics of the comprehensive high school often depict it as inherently anti-subject matter and anti-intellectual. Ravitch (1985), for example, supported her claim of a "vocational and antiacademic bent" in the Cardinal Principles report by implying that the aim of "command of fundamental processes" was the report's only reference to subject matter. Similarly, Angus and Mirel (1999) depicted both the Cardinal Principles report and the comprehensive model as inherently anti-academic, stating that the report "made no reference to subjects or their arrangement into curricula" (p. 15).[5] While this theme has been favored since the 1950s by popular school critics, Hofstadter's (1963) famous allegations of Anti-Intellectualism in American Life, of course, stands as the quintessential expression of this viewpoint.

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[5] Interestingly, allegations of anti-intellectualism on the part of the CRSE and the comprehensive model are often accompanied by, as in Ravitch's and Angus and Mirel's cases, evocation of the recommendations of the Committee of Ten's report as, for example, a "vision of equal educational opportunity" (Angus and Mirel, 1999, p. 15), despite the fact that the Committee of Ten acknowledged and accepted the contemporary notion (and practice) that secondary education was suited only to future leaders of society--less than ten per cent of adolescents.

The limitation of this interpretation is revealed when the constant reference to subject matter throughout the report is recognized together with the realization that the CRSE crafted the Cardinal Principles report as an umbrella statement for the ten subject area committee reports and the four non-subject matter reports. In fact, *the CRSE characterized the "departmental organization" of secondary education as "desirable"* (pp. 27-28). What the CRSE called for, in effect, were new ways of treating subject matter--specifically, of treating subject matter not as an end in itself, but as a means to other ends, and of organizing curricula in a more coherent fashion than possible in a fragmented compartmentalized approach by focusing all courses on the seven unifying aims. The CRSE also recommended that, since non-traditional students--i.e., students who did not necessarily enjoy an inclination toward conventional academic instruction--would represent an increasingly large portion of the high school population, in order to make curricula accessible to these students, differentiated treatment of subject matter was necessary. The CRSE's intent was to make subject matter accessible to and applicable for all students--indeed, for all youth. If, subsequently, educators opted to oversimplify subject matter rather than employ more sophisticated methods of instruction, this is best understood as a consequence of the failure to implement the CRSE's recommendations, not as an intent of the CRSE.

Yet, in his study of The High School Curriculum during the 1920s, George Counts concluded that "the college prep tradition . . . remains a powerful factor in secondary education" (p. 11). Counts concluded, "Since this tradition continues to carry great social prestige, it dominates the comprehensive high school" (p. 11). Later, Krug (1964) suggested that accusations of anti-intellectualism were unreasonable and noted that, with respect to the Cardinal Principles report, "Snedden had found it too academic for his tastes." Krug concluded, "In the long run, the effect of the report may have been to support those who wished to preserve as much as possible of the academic tradition" (p. 400). A few years earlier, Krug (1960) had suggested presciently, "It would be unfair to suggest that the Commission was anti-intellectual; but it is also probable that the Cardinal Principles would not satisfy those who feel that intellectual training must be identified explicitly as the sole or the most important objective of secondary education" (p. 36). Thus, not only are allegations that the recommendations in the Cardinal Principles report was anti-subject matter inaccurate, but the CRSE's intent to provide coherence to the curriculum by focusing disparate subjects on common aims was not subsequently implemented, as well. In each instance, consequences were incommensurate with intentions.

The Forgotten Elaboration of the Comprehensive Model

Lastly, educational researchers and reformers typically home in on a single proposal for the comprehensive school, usually the Cardinal Principles report or the Conant report, define their agenda against a selective (mis)representation of that proposal, and disregard the numerous other proposals that over time

effectively elaborated the comprehensive ideal. This piecemeal approach to the history of the comprehensive school results not only in a distortion of the historic record, but also in the amusing irony of critics of the comprehensive model endorsing provisions historically associated with it. Thus, a special issue of Educational Administration Quarterly devoted to the theme "What will replace the comprehensive high school?" (Raywid, 1997) identified a number of practices--including participatory decision making, integrated curricula and block scheduling, integrated guidance, fostering a sense of community, interdisciplinary teaching teams, and common planning time--as alternatives to the comprehensive high school, when *in fact each of these practices previously was considered a component of the comprehensive model* (Wraga, 1999; Raywid, 1999). By the early 1950s, for example, advocates of the comprehensive high school refined provisions for achieving the unifying function, rejected tracking, advocated inclusion of the disabled in regular education, and anticipated the role of the public school in mitigating racial discrimination. These realities have been lost on contemporary critics of the comprehensive high school. Rather than recognizing such progressive practices as intentions of advocates of the comprehensive high school, the tendency is to depict them as antithetical to the model. At the same time, bureaucratic obstacles to implementing such practices are portrayed as evidence of a congenital resistance of the model to improvement.

Of course, the issues of who wrote and who influenced the Cardinal Principles report, of whether the report manifests social efficiency-social control ideology, of whether it endorses tracking and undermines academic curricula, and of scholarly neglect of subsequent proposals for the comprehensive model, are academic. Among academics, however, the ability to associate the Cardinal Principles report and the comprehensive model with Dewey rather than with Snedden and the social control ideology, and to distance it from tracking and anti-intellectualism, could create favorable scholarly conditions for a widespread reappraisal of the comprehensive high school model as a resource for improving secondary education. For this to happen, however, we can no longer confuse the intentions of the designers of the comprehensive model with the ways in which the comprehensive model was implemented--and with ways in which it was not implemented--in American secondary schools.

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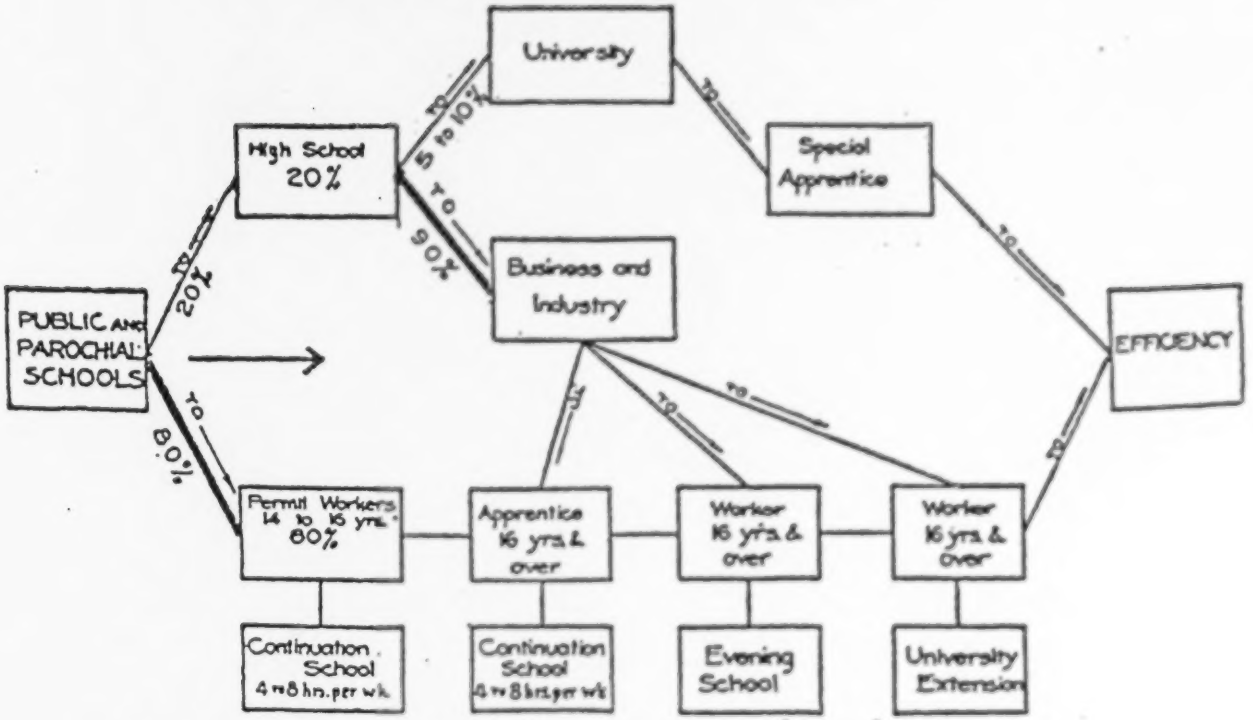
A CHOICE OF ROUTES TO EFFICIENCY



The Lower Route is the Workingman's Opportunity; His High School & College.
Until Recently it has been almost wholly neglected educationally in America.

From: Industrial Education: Report of the Committee on Industrial Education. Presented at the Twentieth Annual Convention of the National Association of Manufacturers, New York, NY, May 25, 1915, p. 4.

FIGURE 1 A DUAL SYSTEM OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

BEST COPY AVAILABLE